

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A surgical instrument adapted to fix a portion of a beating heart by applying a negative pressure thereto, said surgical instrument comprising:

a member adapted to contact the portion of the beating heart, said member having a plurality of suction ports adapted to deliver the negative pressure to the portion of the beating heart, a suction conduit for connecting said suction ports to a source of negative pressure, and suction apertures interconnecting said suction ports, respectively, with said suction, wherein each said suction aperture has a cross-sectional area substantially smaller than a cross-sectional area of said respective suction port with which it connects and smaller than a cross-sectional area of said suction conduit with which it connects.

16-25. (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) A suction member for fixing a portion of a beating heart by applying a negative pressure through said suction member, said suction member comprising a body having a surface configured to engage the portion of the beating heart, a plurality of suction ports having a distal opening through said surface and adapted to engage the surface of the beating heart, a suction aperture fluidly connected to each said suction port, and a suction conduit passing within said body and fluidly connecting with each said suction aperture, said suction conduit being in fluid communication with a source of negative pressure; each said suction aperture having a cross-sectional area smaller than a cross sectional area of said suction conduit.

27 -28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A suction arrangement for a surgical instrument adapted for fixation of a portion of a beating heart, said arrangement comprising:

a first suction port formed in a contact member of the surgical instrument and having first and second ends, said first end being open to fluid flow therethrough and opening to a surface of said contact member, said second end connected to a suction aperture having a smaller cross-sectional area than a cross-sectional area of said first end, and a suction conduit connected to said suction aperture, said suction conduit being adapted to connect with a source of negative pressure; said suction conduit having a larger cross-sectional area than said cross-sectional area of said suction aperture; and

a second suction port formed in said contact member and having first and second ends, said first end being open to fluid flow therethrough and opening to a surface of said contact member, said second end of said second suction port connected to a second suction aperture having a smaller cross-sectional area than a cross-sectional area of said first end of said second suction port, and the suction conduit being connected to said second suction aperture, said suction conduit having a larger cross-sectional area than said cross-sectional area of said second suction aperture .

30 - 33. (Canceled)

33. (Previously Presented) The suction member of claim 26, wherein said surface is substantially flat.

34. (Currently Amended) The suction member of claim 1526, wherein said member surface is contoured to engage a curved surface of the heart.

35. (New) The suction arrangement of claim 29, wherein said surface is contoured to engage the surface of the heart.

36. (New) A suction member for fixing a portion of a beating heart by applying a negative pressure through said suction member, said suction member comprising a body having a surface contoured to engage a curved surface of the beating heart, a plurality of suction ports having a distal opening through said surface and adapted to engage the surface of the beating heart, a suction aperture fluidly connected to each said suction port, and a suction conduit passing within said body and fluidly connecting with each said suction aperture, said suction conduit being in fluid communication with a source of negative pressure; each said suction aperture having a cross-sectional area smaller than a cross sectional area of said suction conduit.

37. (New) The surgical instrument of claim 15, wherein said suction apertures are oriented off-center to a circumference of said suction portion with which each said suction aperture respectively connects.

38. (New) The suction member of claim 26, wherein said suction apertures are oriented off-center to a circumference of said suction portion with which each said suction aperture respectively connects.

39. (New) The suction arrangement of claim 29, wherein said suction apertures are oriented off-center to a circumference of said suction portion with which each said suction aperture respectively connects.

40. (New) The suction member of claim 36, wherein said suction apertures are oriented off-center to a circumference of said suction portion with which each said suction aperture respectively connects.

41. (New) The suction arrangement of claim 29, wherein said suction ports are aligned in an array in said contact member.

42. (New) The surgical instrument of claim 15, wherein said member comprises a pair of contact members each having a plurality of said suction ports interconnected with a suction conduit via said suction apertures, respectively.

43. (New) The surgical instrument of claim 42, wherein said suction ports in each said contact member are aligned in an array.

44. (New) The surgical instrument of claim 15, wherein at least a contact surface of said member is contoured to engage the surface of the heart.

45. (New) A suction member for fixing a portion of a beating heart by applying a negative pressure through said suction member, said suction member comprising a body having a surface

configured to engage the portion of the beating heart, at least two suction ports opening to said surface, a suction aperture fluidly connected to each said suction port, and a suction conduit fluidly connecting with each said suction aperture, said suction conduit being adapted to fluidly communicate with a source of negative pressure; each said suction aperture having a cross-sectional area smaller than a cross sectional area of said suction conduit.

46. (New) The suction member of claim 45, wherein said surface is contoured to engage a curved surface of the heart.

47. (New) The suction member of claim 45, wherein each said cross-sectional area of each said suction aperture is smaller than a cross-sectional area of said suction port to which it respectively connects.